

Person County Natural Areas Inventory

McGHEES MILL ROAD RARE PLANT SITE

Site Number: 3

Size: 14 acres; 1.3 miles along SR 1336

Site Significance: County

Quadrangles: Alton, Olive Hill

Ownership: Progress Energy Carolinas, Inc.

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES: This site contains several populations of the Significantly Rare southeastern bold goldenrod (*Oligoneuron rigidum* var. *glabratum*), plus a host of other herbaceous plants requiring circumneutral soils.

LANDSCAPE RELATIONSHIPS: The McGhees Mill Basic Forest lies along the western side of this site, at the southern end of the site. About 0.4 mile west of the site, across After Bay Reservoir, is the McGhees Mill Powerline Clearing site. About 1.75 miles to the northeast is the Hyco/Ghent Hardwood Forest natural area.

SITE DESCRIPTION: Most of the area just southeast of After Bay Reservoir, lying alongside McGhees (often spelled “McGehees” on maps) Mill Road (SR 1336), is mapped as Orange and Wilkes soils, which are derived from weathering of mafic crystalline rocks, such as gabbro, diorite, or hornblende schist. The high pH soils, which tend to be brownish in color with little of the red/orange color of acidic soils, not surprisingly provide habitat for many plants that are scarce in North Carolina (as the great majority of the soils in the Piedmont are acidic).

Most of the site lies on the west side of this road, for this is the side that contains the electric lines paralleling the road and thus has a wider mowed road margin – habitat for herbaceous plants. The eastern side is also included in the site boundary, north of the road intersection with Edwin Robertson Road (SR 1322). The land adjacent to the roadside habitat is forested, some in hardwoods and the other in pines of various ages.

The southern 0.4 mile of the site, adjacent to the McGhees Mill Basic Forest natural area (Site Number 5), contains the highest pH soils (Orange soil series) and the greatest diversity of notable plants. There is a very small population of the State Significantly Rare southeastern bold goldenrod (*Oligoneuron rigidum* var. *glabratum*) in the clearing. Other notable herbs, all of which favor high pH soils, are curly-heads (*Clematis ochroleuca*), green milkweed (*Asclepias viridiflora*), scaly gay-feather (*Liatris squarrosa*), lance-leaf loosestrife (*Lysimachia lanceolata*), and nettle-leaf noseburn (*Tragia urticifolia*). American plum (*Prunus americana*) is present, as saplings; this is an uncommon species in the state.

Roughly 0.4 road-mile northwest of the Edwin Robertson Road intersection, a large population of the goldenrod is present in a clearing on the southwestern side of McGhees Mill Road, and a few plants occur on wooded roadbanks on the northeastern side of the road. About 0.3 mile farther northward, not far from the reservoir, moderate populations of the goldenrod are present